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VIRGINIA MAN PLEADS GUILTY TO CHILD PORNOGRAPHY CHARGES

Websites Featured Videos of Underage Boys Engaging in Explicit Sexual Conduct

WASHINGTON D.C. – A Virginia man has pleaded guilty to multiple charges involving the sexual exploitation of minor boys and the operation of child pornography websites, Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division and U.S. Attorney John L. Brownlee of the Western District of Virginia announced today.

At a hearing today in federal court in Roanoke, Virginia, Gregory John Mitchel, 38, of Dublin, Virginia, entered a guilty plea to four counts, including the commercial production and sale of child pornography through the Internet via child pornography-based websites. Specifically, Mitchel pleaded guilty to production of child pornography, the distribution of child pornography, and the sale and possession of child pornography.

An investigation that resulted in Mitchel's arrest on Sept. 12, 2005 revealed that Mitchel facilitated and assisted in the daily operation of child pornography websites. The sites Mitchel administered – including a website called Justinsfriends.com – sold membership subscriptions to individuals looking to obtain videos of minor boys engaging in sexually explicit conduct. Mitchel was also directly responsible for producing content for the websites by filming videos of minors engaging in sex acts. Mitchel and others received proceeds from the membership subscriptions.

Because of a previous child pornography conviction, Mitchel faces a mandatory minimum sentence of not less than 25 years to a maximum of 50 years for both the production and distribution of child pornography. The charge of selling child pornography carries a sentence of not less than 15 to 40 years in prison, and the charge of possession of child pornography carries a sentence of not less than 10 years to a maximum of 20 years for the possession of child pornography. Mitchel also faces lifetime supervised release if released from incarceration. The United States is also seeking forfeiture of assets and proceeds used in the commission of the offenses.

The case was investigated by the Federal Bureau of Investigation and is being prosecuted by Trial Attorney Sherri A. Stephan of the Criminal Division's Child Exploitation and Obscenity Section and Assistant U.S. Attorney Joseph W. H. Mott of the Western District of Virginia.

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